

## THE QUEST FOR UNITY: PROCLUS' CONCEPTION OF MUSIC

The focus of this paper is on Proclus' notion of *mousikē* which emerges from his effort to reconstruct and systematise various aspects of Plato's notion of *mousikē* in the *Commentary on Plato's Republic*. Proclus famously regarded himself as an expositor and defender of Plato's philosophy. In doing so he occasionally let Plato hold his own views. The present paper seeks to demonstrate how Proclus' specific aims bring about a reconsideration of the nature of musical meaning and functions of music distancing him from both Plato and his less remote predecessor and Neoplatonist fellow Plotinus.

**1. Proclus division of *mousikē*: the background.** Plato's discussions of *mousikē* on different occasions allow the conclusion that he held a multifaceted notion thereof. However, he nowhere formulated a unified account of *mousikē* which would have brought together its various aspects. This task has been accomplished by Proclus in the fifth treatise *On poetry, Its Kinds, and Plato's Judgement of the Best Harmony and Rhythm* of his *Commentary on Republic*<sup>1</sup> where Plato's views on *mousikē* and poetry as one of its parts are expounded. The essay is not a line-by-line commentary but a collection of ten questions raised by Plato's considerations about poetry in the *Republic*. The fourth, the fifth and the sixth questions deal immediately with music; the fourth and the sixth address technical issues concerning harmonies and rhythms whereas the fifth uncovers disunity in Plato's views about the relationship between music and poetry which Proclus purports to explain away. Specifically, he identifies two mutually exclusive attitudes to poetry one of which attaches it to music whereas the other explicitly separates them. The first approach is advanced in the passage from *Phaedrus*<sup>2</sup> where poetry is clearly subsumed under the *mousikē*<sup>3</sup>. The opposing view ap-

1. in *Platonis Rempublicam*, ed. W. Kroll, 2 vols., Leipzig, 1899-1901. Cf. E. MOUTSOPOULOS, *La philosophie de la musique dans le système de Proclus*, Athens, Academy of Athens, 2004, pp. 11 sq.; 79 sq.; 203 sq.

2. PLATO, *Phaedrus*, 245 a ὅς δ' ἂν ἄνευ μανίας Μουσῶν ἐπὶ ποιητικὰς θύρας ἀφίκηται, πεισθεὶς ὡς ἄρα ἐκ τέχνης ἱκανὸς ποιητὴς ἐσόμενος, ἀτελὴς αὐτὸς τε καὶ ἡ ποίησις ὑπὸ τῆς τῶν μαινομένων ἢ τοῦ σωφρονοῦντος ἠφανίσθη.

3. It is also illustrated by the passage from the *Laws*, VII, 719 c: «ποιητής, ὁπότεν ἐν τῷ





pears in close proximity in *Phaedrus*<sup>4</sup> which makes the alleged contradiction even more pressing. In his attempt to remove it, Proclus is following his standard strategy, namely to demonstrate that Plato advocated a multifold notion of music which accommodates both attitudes. This strategy is in a sense announced in the formulation of the fifth question: What is real music and what are the lower types of music? Responding to this question, Proclus takes pains to reconstruct Plato's notion of *mousikē* in its full scope bringing together his scattered remarks in different dialogues.

We see, then, that Proclus' interest in music is subordinated to his concern with poetry which he regarded – alongside other literary forms – more pertinent in view of achieving the main goal of every human being to become like a god. Bearing in mind the motivation that lies behind Proclus' classification, we turn now to the discussion of the types of *mousikē* distinguished by him.

**2. Music qua philosophy.** Relying upon Socrates' remarks in *Phaedo* 61 a, Proclus maintains that philosophy itself is the most beautiful music. Music *qua* philosophy is inspired by the gods and possesses the power to harmonise the soul by applying the Dorian mode and celebrate the divine. These effects of music which make it indispensable as a means of education are most readily to be found in the philosopher who is a musician *par excellence*<sup>5</sup>.

Before looking at this passage of Proclus, it is worth noting that there were different ways to conceive music as philosophy in antiquity. For example, the similarity of the effects that both philosophy and music produce (e.g., the purging of the soul and moral improvement) could serve as a unifying factor. An alternative explanatory model was based upon the principle of structural analogy: the harmonious concordance of musical sounds was regarded as a counterpart of consistency in argument and action. Plato made use of both strategies while likening music to philosophy. In doing so he construed *mousikē* (a) as the art covering poetry and music, (b) as a generalised concept that embraces all activities under the patronage of the

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τρίποδι τῆς Μούσης καθίζηται, τότε οὐκ ἔμφρων ἐστίν, οἷον δὲ κρίνη τις τὸ ἐπὶ ὄν ῥεῖν ἐτοίμως ἔᾱ».

4. PLATO, *Phaedrus*, 248 d-e: ... ἀλλὰ τὴν μὲν πλεῖστα ἰδοῦσαν εἰς γονὴν ἀνδρὸς γενησομένου φιλοσόφου ἢ φιλοκάλου ἢ μουσικοῦ τινὸς καὶ ἐρωτικοῦ... ἔκτη ποιητικὸς ἢ τῶν περὶ μίμησιν τις ἄλλος ἀρμόσει.

5. *Ibid.*, 248 d-e: λέγομεν οὖν καὶ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν αὐτὴν μεγίστην εἶναι μουσικὴν, ὥσπερ καὶ ἐρωτικὴν εἰ βούλει φάναι τὴν ἐρωτικωτάτην ἀρμολογίαν οὐ λύραν, ἀλλ' αὐτὴν τὴν ψυχὴν τὴν ἀρίστην ἀρμονίαν, δι' ἣν ἡ ψυχὴ τὰ τε ἀνθρώπινα πάντα δυνατὸν κοσμεῖν καὶ τὰ θεῖα τελέως ἡμνωδεῖν, αὐτὸν μιμουμένη τὸν μουσηγέτην. Cf. *in Remp.*, I, 57,8-13 I, 57, 8-13 (K.).



Muses and (c) finally he applied it to music in a narrow sense as the art of harmonies and rhythms. The affinity between philosophy and music in a wider sense figures in Plato's discussions of education in which he pleads for the complementarity of music and gymnastics vehemently criticising the one-sided emphasis upon one of them. For example, in the third book of the *Republic* music and philosophy are contrasted to gymnastics as activities that foster the spiritual development of the individual<sup>6</sup>. In *Gorgias* consistency of the discourse is given preference over the concordance of tunes of the lyre or choral singing<sup>7</sup>. A parallel between philosophy and music in the narrow sense is drawn in Alcibiades' praise of Socrates in *Symposium* where the effects of philosophical discourse are compared to those of instrumental music<sup>8</sup>.

Returning now to Proclus, let me remind that his first reference in the discussion of Plato's notion of music *qua* philosophy is to *Phaedo* 61 a where music is taken in its broadest meaning<sup>9</sup>. This follows unambiguously from Socrates' explanation of the reasons for his writing poems<sup>10</sup>. Socrates points out that he initially interpreted the command of his dream «to make music and work at it» as encouragement to continue his philosophical inquiry. But after his execution had been delayed by the festival of Apollo he decided to write what is «ordinarily called music» to make sure that he was obeying the command<sup>11</sup>.

Reconstructing Plato's notion of music *qua* philosophy, Proclus further adduces passages from *Laches* and *Cratylus* in which the connection between music and wisdom is emphasised. In the former the musical man is characterised as rightly tuned whose words are in accord with his deeds<sup>12</sup>. The latter reveals how this end can be achieved through the etymology of

6. PLATO, *Rep.*, 411 c: ἂν αὖ γυμναστικῇ πολλὰ πονῇ καὶ εὐωχῆται εὖ μάλα, μουσικῆς δὲ καὶ φιλοσοφίας μὴ ἄπτηται, οὐ πρῶτον μὲν εὖ ἴσχων τὸ σῶμα φρονήματός τε καὶ θυμοῦ ἐμπίπλεται καὶ ἀνδρειότερος γίγνεται αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ;

7. PLATO, *Gorgias*, 482 b: καίτοι ἔγωγε οἶμαι, ὦ βέλτιστε, καὶ τὴν λύραν μοι κρεῖττον εἶναι ἀναρμωστῆν τε καὶ διαφωνεῖν, καὶ χορόν ᾧ χορηγοῖν, καὶ πλείστους ἀνθρώπους μὴ ὁμολογεῖν μοι ἀλλ' ἐναντία λέγειν μᾶλλον ἢ ἓνα ὄντα ἐμέ ἐμαυτῷ ἀσύμφωνον εἶναι καὶ ἐναντία λέγειν.

8. PLATO, *Symposium*, 215 c: ἀλλ' οὐκ αὐλητῆς; πολὺ γε θαυμασιώτερος ἐκείνου...σὺ δ' ἐκείνου τοσοῦτον μόνον διαφέρεις, ὅτι ἄνευ ὀργάνων ψιλοῖς λόγοις ταῦτόν τοῦτο ποιεῖς.

9. Some scholars translated *mousike* here as «arts». See, for example: Plato's *Phaedo*, trans. with notes by D. GALLOP, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975; R.S. BLUCK, *Plato's Phaedo*, a transl. with introduction and appendices, London, Routledge, 1955.

10. Burnet's suggestion that philosophy is music in so far as it is «the true soul-purge» is misleading. Cf. J. BURNET, *Plato's Phaedo*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1911, p. 60.

11. PLATO, *Phaedo*, 61 a.

12. PLATO, *Laches*, 188 d-e.



Apollo's name which points to his power to move things together establishing order at different levels of the universe<sup>13</sup>.

Proclus' treatment of the notion of music *qua* philosophy which is confined to a mere stating of some aspects thereof hints at its rather moderate significance in view of the aims of his inquiry.

**3. Music *qua* inspiration.** Unlike the preceding type of music, the music inspired by the Muses is art in a proper sense. Proclus refers here to the passage from *Phaedrus* 245 a where Plato characterises as positive the kind of madness that springs from the Muses. The inspired music moves the souls to the poetry possessed by the gods and is identical with poetry. Its goal is to celebrate the heroic deeds of the ancestors motivating the future generations to follow their example, i. e., to love and resemble the virtue<sup>14</sup>.

Emphasising the significance of the social and political role of the inspired poet, Proclus compares him with the lawgiver. The latter produces normative definition of the good citizen, universal models and general guidelines for education that leads to this ideal, whereas the poet provides particular examples<sup>15</sup>.

Proclus faithfully expounded here the passage from *Phaedrus* 245 a with the exception of the above remark about the lawgiver which seems to be a reminiscence of the discussion of music and education in the *Laws*. Whatever its origin, it usefully underlines the mimetic nature of the inspired poetry which is, in contrast to the work of the lawgiver, *τρίτον ἀπό τῆς ἀληθείας*<sup>16</sup>.

To summarise: according to the fifth essay, music *qua* inspiration falls together with poetry, is imitative by its nature, and its essential features are that it derives directly from the Muses and aims at cultivation of the young by providing particular examples for imitation.

It is instructive to turn now to Proclus' discussion of the inspired poetry in the sixth essay of the *Commentary to Republic*. Proclus' aims and methods here are quite different<sup>17</sup>, namely his concern is with the classification of the types of poetry which correlate with corresponding kinds of human life. The Diadochus sets out to carefully examine Plato's arguments point

13. PLATO, *Cratylus*, 405 c-d.

14. *In Remp.*, II (K) 57,23-25; 29-31, λέγει δὲ καὶ τὴν ἐκ Μουσῶν κατοκωχὴν μουσικὴν τρόπον ἄλλον ὥς ἐξορμῶσαν καὶ κινουῦσαν εἰς τὴν ἔνθεον ποιητικὴν τὰς ψυχὰς... κἀνταῦθα τὸ μουσικὸν εἰς ταὐτὸν ἥκει καὶ τὸ ποιητικόν, τῆς ἐνθέου μουσικῆς τὸν ἔνθεον ἀποτελούσης ποιητήν.

15. *Ibid.*, I, 58,23-27.

16. *Ibid.*, I, 58, 8 (K.).

17. I leave aside the problem of the compatibility between the fifth and the sixth essays. It suffice to point out here that there is a consensus over the independence of both essays.



for point avoiding superficial conclusions. He gives a concise characterisation of different types of poetry and proceeds by demonstrating that his division of poetry coincides with Plato's position<sup>18</sup>. Since, as we already know, «inspired poetry» is but another name for the inspired music, Proclus' considerations apply equally to the latter.

The highest place in Proclus' scheme occupies the inspired poetry<sup>19</sup>. It is not surprising that here he appeals again to *Phaedrus* 245 a<sup>20</sup> picking up and elucidating four points. First, he emphasises that the inspired poetry is a gift of the Muses who establish harmony and properly ordered movement. Its impact on the human soul consists in restoring the divine proportion. Explaining the mechanism through which it works, Proclus characterises it as an act of illumination in which both involved sides - the divinity on the one hand and the illuminant on the other hand - interact with each other. Second, Proclus points out that the purity and receptiveness of the soul and sympathy with the divine are necessary conditions for the successful act of illumination. Third, according to Proclus, the overall effect of such disposition of the soul and of energy that springs from the Muses consists in awakening the soul and putting it into the divinely inspired motion. Finally, Proclus' last point concerns the educational function of the inspired poetry. Proclus disagrees with Plato who believed that it solely improves human existence by education of the young and inexperienced alongside the adults who need a more advanced education. Against this view he argues that the educational role of poetry is to help reach the divine that manifests itself in the souls of the duly disposed recipients<sup>21</sup>.

Even a brief glance at Proclus' analysis of *Phaedrus* 245 a makes clear that here the Diadochus deviates from both Plato and his own exposition of this passage in the fifth treatise. Indeed, it is one thing to inspire to the highest poetry, as Plato puts it, and it is another thing to reveal the veiled truths about the gods through allegorical terms. The crucial point of difference is that the status and functions of the inspired poetry changed significantly in the sixth essay. Specifically, in the earlier discussion the inspired music provides the first acquaintance with virtue for the young who are not prepared to conceive the highest truth and it does this by imitation to the perceptible model. Contrarily to this, the inspired poetry in the sixth essay is conceived of as illumination and it serves as a means of education for those who

18. in *Remp.*, I 177,7 - 179, 30 (K.).

19. *Ibid.*, I 180, 15-16 (K.). Proclus speaks about "chants and other parts of poetry".

20. In addition to *Phaedrus* he considers the passages from *Ion*, 531 a; 533 d-e, 534 e. Cf. in *Remp.*, I, 182, 23-185, 7 (K.) and from the third book of the *Laws*, *ibid.*, I 185,8 - 186,21 (K.) which are irrelevant for our purposes.

21. in *Remp.*, I 180.11-182.21.



have already received their first lessons in political education. It aims to achieve the unity with the divine, the merging of the one in the soul with the all-perfect one, which is the highest goal of human beings. The mechanism of this illumination is not imitation but participation since here we have to do with imperceptible entities. Characteristic is the language of the sixth essay that betrays the Neo-platonic origin of its author. The act of illumination is described as interaction between the participated, i. e. divinity, and the participant, i. e., the human soul.

The upshot of the above is that the difference between the fifth and sixth essays is one between Plato's and Proclus' notions of music which will be elucidated in more detail in the last section of this paper.

**4. Music as a love for beauty.** Unlike the former, this sort of music is not inspired by the gods but can nonetheless enable the elevation of the soul<sup>22</sup>. It is produced by a musician who is a lover of beauty and has the capacity to ascend from a particular beauty, which is contained in audible harmonies and rhythms, to the one that can be approached only rationally. This type of musician is associated with the *mousikos* from *Phaedrus* 248 d who conjoined with the lover of beauty, philosopher and devotee of Eros in the first class of the hierarchy of human beings<sup>23</sup>. They share the privilege to have seen the most and, hence, be able to easily recall the intelligible world and return to the highest reality<sup>24</sup>. At the same time the musician *qua φιλόκαλος* is clearly distinguished from the imitative poet who occupies the sixth place on the scale and is plainly of less worth.

On the one hand, Proclus identifies musician *qua φιλόκαλος* with the lover of beauty pointing out that both of them (alongside the devotee of Eros) operate by departing from sensible beauty to the rational principles that underlie the absolute beauty. They differ only in that the musician perceives the beautiful objects through the eye whereas the *ερωτικός* gains access to them through the ear. The philosopher, unlike them, is in a position to reach directly the realm of Ideas without seeking support in the phenomenal world. But on the other hand Proclus appears willing to place the *mousikos* on par with the philosopher on the grounds that he is familiar with the absolute

22. This type of *mousikē* has no counterpart in the classification of the types of poetry from the sixth essay.

23. Cf. *in Remp.*, I 58.27-59.3 (K.), τὸ τρίτον μουσικῆς εἶδος, οὐκέτι τοῦτο καθάπερ τὸ προρρηθὲν ἐνθεαστικόν, ἀναγωγόν δὲ ὅμως ἀπὸ τῶν φαινομένων ἀρμονιῶν εἰς τὸ ἀφανὲς τῆς θείας ἀρμονίας κάλλος φιλόκαλος γὰρ καὶ ὁ τοιοῦτος μουσικός, ὡσπερ καὶ ὁ ἐρωτικός, εἰ καὶ ὁ μὲν δι' ὄψεως, ὁ δὲ δι' ἀκοῆς ἀναμιμήσκειται τοῦ καλοῦ.

24. Proclus also discusses Plato's classification of men in his *Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements*, 21.7-20 (Friedlein), where he emphasizes the ability of the philosopher to have immediate grasp of the highest truths.



beauty. He maintains that a musician *qua* φιλόκαλος knows both the form which is the absolute beauty and a particular form since a particular beauty is at the same time beauty and a particular form is still a form<sup>25</sup>.

So far, our analysis has shown that Proclus assigns the power to initiate the elevation of the soul to two types of *mousikē* which work to the same end by different methods. The inspired music employs linguistic devices whereas the music of the φιλόκαλος is not associated with the words. It belongs to the group of anagogic arts to which Proclus refers in the *Commentary on Parmenides* demarcating them from “those that soul uses when it is at play, or occupied with mortal things, or ministering to the needs of human life”<sup>26</sup>. Music of the φιλόκαλος examines the ratios and mathematical relations between the harmonies and is *sensu stricto* theory of music. Alongside other mathematical sciences it provides propaedeutics to the study of dialectic.

Proclus’ obvious inclination to consider the sensible music of the inspired poet alongside the music of the φιλόκαλος as a means to achieve the unity with the divine is the point where his originality comes to light.

**5. Music *qua* education/ imitation.** Proclus designated as educational the last kind of *mousikē* which improves the “passions of the soul” through harmony and rhythm and leads to virtue. It has been suggested by Socrates alongside gymnastics for the education of the guardians in the ideal state. This kind of sensible music is further defined *via negativa* as not belonging to the class of propaedeutical disciplines designed for the higher education of the philosopher-kings<sup>27</sup>.

Now, the title «educational» is not quite correct since it does not bring to light the specific character of music in question; indeed, all preceding kinds, though pursuing different goals and employing various methods to arrive at them, are educational in some sense<sup>28</sup>.

The predicate «imitative» may appear *prima facie* even more misleading

25. in *Remp.*, I, 59,16-20 (K.).

26. Εἰ δὲ δὴ καὶ τὰς ἐπιστήμας ἐθέλοι τις τέχνας καλεῖν, διαρετέον οὕτω τῶν τεχνῶν ὅσαι μὲν ἀνάγουσι τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ ὁμοιοῦσι πρὸς νοῦν, τούτων εἶδη θυσόμεθα πρὸς ἃ καὶ οἰκειοῦσιν ἡμᾶς· ὁμοίως γὰρ ἐστὶν ἐκεῖ σχῆμα καὶ ἡ νόησις τοῦ σχήματος, καὶ ἀριθμὸς καὶ ἡ τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ νόησις, καὶ ἀριθμητικῆς οὖν καὶ μουσικῆς καὶ γεωμετρίας καὶ ἀστρονομίας εἶδη θήσομεν, εἰ μὴ τὰς δεδημευμένας λέγοι τις τούτων ἐκάστην, ἀλλὰ τὰς νοερὰς καὶ ἐποπτικὰς τῶν θείων εἰδῶν. (*Procli in Platonis Parmenidem commentaria*). Tomus I: Libros I-III continens / edidit Carlos Steel; recognoverunt brevique adnotatione critica instruxerunt C. STEEL, C. MACE, P.D’HOINE, Imprint, Oxford/New York, Clarendon Press / Oxford University Press, 2007, I, 828,15-21.

27. in *Remp.*, I, 59, 20-22): λέγει δὴ οὖν καὶ ἄλλην ἐπὶ ταύταις μουσικὴν, τὴν παιδευτικὴν τῶν ἡθῶν διὰ τε ἀρμονιῶν τῶν εἰς ἀρετὴν καὶ ῥυθμῶν.

28. The educative aspect is constitutive to Proclus’ notion of *mousike* ὥστ’ εἴη ἂν ἡ ποιητικὴ κατ’ αὐτὸν ἕξις μιμητικὴ διὰ τε μύθων καὶ λόγων μετὰ ἀρμονιῶν καὶ ῥυθμῶν κατ’ ἀρετὴν διατιθέναι διαναμένων τὰς τῶν ἀκουόντων ψυχὰς (*Ibid.*, I, 67,6-9).



since, as a matter of fact, Plato maintained in the fifth essay that *all* poetry is imitative. That this predicate likewise applies to the second type of *mousikē* in Proclus classification is beyond doubt. It proves nonetheless to be an adequate description of the fourth type of music if we consider the information provided in the sixth essay. There Proclus qualified as imitative only the inspired poetry whereas the uninspired one is contrasted to it as one which works through symbols. The imitative poetry corresponds to the third life which is predominantly material and is the most deficient mode of life from the point of view of its cognitive potential. Following Plato's *Sophist*, Proclus subdivided it in *eikastic* that produces correct opinion and *fantastic* that represents things as they seem to be and consequently has a still inferior cognitive status<sup>29</sup>.

Summarising, let me remind the types of *mousikē* that are considered in Proclus systematisation of Plato's views about the nature and functions of music. The first one is *mousikē* in the widest sense as culture which covers all kinds of spiritual activities. Another type of music corresponds to the Greek notion of music as a synthetic art embracing word, melody and rhythm; it can be inspired and uninspired. Finally, there is music *qua* analogic art which is identical with music theory.

Now, it should be recalled that Proclus' overall intention was to clarify the relationship between poetry and *mousikē*. On the basis of the results of his survey, he concluded that poetry should be subsumed either under the music inspired by the gods or under the uninspired *mousikē*, and it is to be separated from music which correlates with the first life in Proclus' categorisation of humans and is not mimetic by its nature<sup>30</sup>.

Interpreting this conclusion of Proclus, Festugiere who is the author of the French translation of Proclus' *Commentary on the Republic*, in a footnote to this passage specified three kinds of music from the second to fourth ruling out only the notion of music *qua* philosophy<sup>31</sup>. He thus extended the notion of music identical with poetry into the music of φιλόκαλος which is obviously mistaken; as we have seen, Proclus explicitly demarcates it from poetry. According to Anne Sheppard, poetry belongs to the second and fourth type of music<sup>32</sup>. This suggestion seems to reflect Proclus' position.

29. *in Remp.*, I, 189-190 (K.).

30. *Ibid.*, I, 60,6-9 (K.). Τοσούτων τοίνυν ὄντων τῶν παρ' αὐτῷ μουσικῶν ἤδη φανερόν, ὅπως τὴν ποιητικὴν ὑπὸ τὴν μουσικὴν τακτέον, εἴτε τὴν ἐνθεον εἴτε τὴν μὴ τοιαύτην, καὶ τίνος διοριστέον, ὅτι τῆς ἀναγομένης.

31. Cf. *Commentaire sur la République*, trad. A. J. FESTUGIERE, Paris, Vrin, 1970, p. 76: «C'est-à-dire, qu'il s'agisse ou de la 2e ou des 3e et 4e espèces de la *mousiqué*».

32. A. SHEPPARD, *Studies on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Essays of Proclus' Commentary on the Republic*, Hypomnemata, Untersuchungen zur Antike und zu ihrem Nachleben. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1980, p. 18.



Interestingly, music *qua* philosophy does not appear in Proclus' recapitulating remarks, neither is it mentioned by the commentators which points to the assumed lack of connection between this kind of *mousikē* and poetry. This assumption might appear plausible if we take into account that here music is not construed as art proper. But on the other hand, it is a science which leads to wisdom and virtue and embraces all pursuits that stand under the patronage of Apollo and the Muses including poetry. This is certainly an essentially different kind of relationship compared to the congruity between the inspired music and poetry but it should not be ignored for the sake of completeness.

We are not going to dwell further on Proclus' question about the relation of music to poetry which lies behind his systematisation of Plato's views about music. Our interest is in Proclus' own notion of *mousikē* to which we are turning now.

**6. Theurgy versus Contemplation.** If we ask whether Proclus' classification of music is complete, i. e., does justice to the variety of meanings of *mousikē* found in Plato's works, the answer should be negative. Proclus, for example, does not mention *mousikē* as *choreia* – a unity of melody with word and gesture that plays a prominent role in the *Laws*<sup>33</sup>. Likewise absent from Proclus' classification is the narrow notion of music as rhythmically ordered movement of musical sounds to which Plato refers in *Gorgias*<sup>34</sup>. These omissions, I suggest, are to be explained through Proclus' overriding interest in poetry and literature in general and consequently his preference for the kinds of music associated with words. Other means of artistic expression are for Proclus evidently of rather marginal importance.

One may object at this point that Proclus' is not original here. In effect, the priority attached by Plato to music tied to words and his demotion of purely instrumental music are well-known. This was due to the circumstance that melody separated from the text is semantically ambivalent and vague which significantly decreases its capacity to mold character. Conformably to Plato, Proclus assigned to this kind of music an important political and social role in the life of the *polis*. Differences emerge at the point where Proclus draws

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33. *Laws*, II, 655 a: ἀλλ' ἐν γὰρ μουσικῇ καὶ σχήματα μὲν καὶ μέλη ἔνεστι, περὶ ῥυθμὸν καὶ ἁρμονίαν οὔσης τῆς μουσικῆς, ὥστε εὐρυθμον μὲν καὶ εὐάρμοστον, εὐχρῶν δὲ μέλος ἢ σχῆμα οὐκ ἔστιν ἀπεικάσαντα ὥσπερ οἱ χοροδιδάσκαλοι ἀπεικάζουσιν ὀρθῶς φθέγγεσθαι.

In his *Commentary on Plato's Alcibiades I*, 208, 5-6 (Westerink), Proclus mentions «the ensemble of the divisions of music viz. song, melody and step».

34. *Gorgias*, 449 d: Οὐκοῦν καὶ ἡ μουσικῇ περὶ τὴν τῶν μελῶν ποίησιν.



a distinction between the inspired and uninspired *mousikē*. As such, it is not new but had been offered by Plato as a distinction between *technē*, i.e., the art based on a fixed system of rules on the one hand, and poetry that derives from the irrational, manic inspiration on the other hand. The peculiar Proclean contribution consists in the re-evaluation of the epistemic status of the inspired *mousikē* which causes tension in his own position. For Plato inspired *mousikē* was a source of pleasure as the passage from *Phaedrus* 259 c unequivocally shows, whereas the criterion of value of the mimetic *mousikē* that served for training of the young was the correctness of representation<sup>35</sup>. Remarkably, in the sixth essay Proclus extensively discusses Plato's rejection of pleasure as a basis for judgment of mimetic poetry approving it without hesitation, but he did not even mention the connection between the inspired poetry and pleasure established by Plato. The reason, I assume, is that he should have found it difficult to reconcile this belief of Plato with his own attitude to the inspired poetry. Proclus' raised the inspired *mousikē* above the level of pleasurable experience placing a great emphasis upon its role in higher education, something that Plato did not intend. The educational significance of the inspired music as a key which opens the door to the divine realm is based upon Proclus' more positive appraisal of its cognitive status. According to Proclus, the imitative poet is thrice removed from the truth whereas the poet possessed by the Muses is in contact with the highest reality and is capable of contemplating eternal verities<sup>36</sup>.

With this move the Diadochus explicitly acknowledged symbolic representation as a type of musical meaning essentially different from imitation which correlates with imperceptible realities: they namely cannot be imitated but pointed indirectly to. Proclus believed that the divine can be approached only through symbols which he regarded as a constitutive part of the practice of theurgy. The mechanism of the latter was based upon the intimate relation between the soul and the gods, the sympathy and the proper disposition of the soul upon which Proclus insisted in his characterisation of the inspired *mousikē*.

As already mentioned, for Proclus the symbolic function was primarily performed by linguistic means, and this is one reason for his interest – one is tempted to add «exclusive» - in music associated with words. He seems to place some value upon purely musical elements of *mousikē* when he takes pains to justify the acceptance of Phrygian mode on the grounds that it can be used in religious rites<sup>37</sup>. However, it is difficult to say how he could con-

35. PLATO, *Laws*, II, 668 a-c

36. *in Remp.*, I, 199,1-3 (K.).

37. *Ibid.*, I, 62,5-8 (K.).



ceive the mechanism of symbolic expression through music in the narrow sense<sup>38</sup>.

There can be no doubt that for Proclus the inspired *mousikē*, as an important ingredient of the theurgy, was the main means of connecting human souls with divine beings and as such it gained access into higher education. Here exactly he deviated from both Plato and Plotinus. Plato believed that only intelligible music is pertinent and valuable as an instrument of approaching the divine. In so doing, it employs, as one of mathematical sciences, the method of contemplation. Plotinus who relied heavily on Plato took a very similar position but he, so to say, «aesthetised» the process of contemplation through his emphasis upon the experiential aspect. Proclus neither ignored nor disapproved this kind of anagogic *mousikē*. It is mentioned and accurately described in his categorisation of the types of *mousikē* as music of the lover of beauty. But a noteworthy feature of his notion of music is that he conferred an equal epistemic and educational status on the sensible music *qua* inspired music being convinced that it can convey symbolically the higher truth. This revision of Plato's concept of music should be seen as a part (or a consequence) of his project to bring about a rapprochement between mythology, religion and philosophy. The inspired music was namely the ideal point where they met.

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38. Jamblichus, for instance, explicitly acknowledged musical compositions as a kind of material symbols.



**ΕΙΣ ΑΝΑΖΗΤΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΕΝΟΤΗΤΑΣ:  
Η ΑΝΤΙΛΗΨΗ ΤΟΥ ΠΡΟΚΛΟΥ ΠΕΡΙ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ**

**Π ε ρ ί λ η ψ η**

Ἡ παροῦσα μελέτη ἐξετάζει τὴν ἀντίληψη τοῦ Πρόκλου περὶ μουσικῆς, ἡ ὁποία προκύπτει ἀπὸ τὴ συστηματοποιημένη μελέτη τῶν θέσεων τοῦ Πλάτωνος περὶ μουσικῆς ὅπως αὐτὲς ἐμφανίζονται στὰ Σχολία του στὸν πλατωνικὸ διάλογο *Πολιτεία*. Στὴν πέμπτη ἐνότητα τῶν σχολίων ἐπιχειρεῖται ἡ συγκρότηση μιᾶς ἐνοποιημένης πλατωνικῆς ἀντίληψης γιὰ τὴ μουσικὴ ἢ ὁποία συνιστᾷ τὸ ἀποτέλεσμα μιᾶς ἐρμηνευτικῆς ἐπεξεργασίας τῶν διάσπαρτων παρατηρήσεων τοῦ φιλοσόφου ἐπὶ τοῦ θέματος. Ὁ Πρόκλος προσπαθεῖ νὰ ἐναρμονίσει τὶς μεταξὺ τους ἀντιφάσεις προτείνοντας μιὰ ταξινομήση τῶν διαφορῶν ὁψεων τῆς ἀντίληψης τοῦ Πλάτωνος γιὰ τὴ μουσικὴ. Αὕτὴ περιλαμβάνει: (α) μουσικὴ *qua* φιλοσοφία· (β) μουσικὴ *qua* ἔμπνευση· (γ) μουσικὴ ὡς ἀγάπη τῆς ὁμορφιάς· καὶ (δ) μουσικὴ ὡς παιδεία/μίμηση. Στὸ παρὸν ἄρθρο ἐξετάζονται οἱ παρεκκλίσεις ἀπὸ τὶς ἀπόψεις τοῦ Πλάτωνος καὶ τονίζεται ἡ πρωτοτυπία τοῦ Πρόκλου. Ὅπως ὑποστηρίζεται, ἡ ἐκτίμησις τοῦ γνωστικοῦ καὶ παιδευτικοῦ ρόλου τῆς ἐμπνευσμένης μουσικῆς τοῦ Διαδόχου διαφέρει σημαντικὰ ἀπὸ τὴ θέση τοῦ Πλάτωνος. Ὁ Πλάτων πίστευε ὅτι ἡ ἐμπνευσμένη μουσικὴ εἶναι *τρίτον ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας*, ἐνῶ σύμφωνα μὲ τὸν Πρόκλο, αὕτὴ ἀποτελεῖ ἓνα σημαντικό στοιχεῖο τῆς θεουργίας καὶ ὡς τέτοιο ἀποτελεῖ μέσον προσέγγισης τῶν αἰώνιων ἀληθειῶν καὶ ἔνωσης μὲ τὴν θεότητα.

Ε. ΠΑΝΑΓΙΩΤΙΔΗ